

# YOUNG OBSERVER

## In the footsteps of saints



(OSV News photo/courtesy Benedictine College) Pilgrims from Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan., pose outside the Vatican's St. Peter's Basilica March 9.

### Rome pilgrimage leaves students with desire to pursue God

By Jack Figgie | OSV News

**S**urrounded by the chaos of tourists visiting the Eternal City, 17 college students sought to escape the secular world of Rome.

They were not there for the sights, but for a weeklong pilgrimage focused on walking in the footsteps of saints and deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pilgrims, all from Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, used their spring break to travel to Rome for a Eucharistic pilgrimage. Throughout the week, the pilgrims visited churches and holy sites across Rome as they meditated on the mystery of the Eucharist.

"I think the difference between this pilgrimage and going to Rome as a tourist is the intentionality behind it," sophomore Donald Gerle said. "We made an intentional effort to go and seek the Lord in a very particular way while we were here. It was so beautiful because we got to see and literally walk the roads that some of the greatest saints walked while on their journey to the Lord."

Prayer remained at the center of the pilgrim's day allowing them to use the pilgrimage as an opportunity to not just learn about the faith and see the grand churches of Rome, but to re-

center their life on Christ.

"It was really exciting to get to go on a pilgrimage for spring break," sophomore Elise Amour said, "because it gave me an opportunity to focus my life more on God than on myself like a lot of kids do when they go on spring break, because many people just go on these trips so they can have fun."

"The emphasis of prayer throughout the trip really made this a pilgrimage," said sophomore John Connor. "The mindset of going into the churches and focusing on prayer and on the Lord and the faith wherever we were going — rather than going into these churches really briefly and just admiring their architecture — was so fruitful."

Each day, the pilgrims made a Holy



(OSV News photo/Jack Figgie) Pilgrims from Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, are pictured praying with a homeless man March 5, during a pilgrimage to Rome.

they saw that it was fitting to have something so grand for the sacrifice of the Mass. It really made me think about what my disposition is towards the Mass and the reverence I should use when receiving the Lord in the Eucharist."

Many of the churches housed relics

Hour in a different church and attended Mass at one of St. Philip Neri's pilgrimage churches. Experiencing Mass and Eucharistic adoration at the churches helped Amour center the pilgrimage on Christ.

"It really inspired me to see the Mass and the sacraments for what they truly are," said Amour. "It was just really inspiring to see the act of worship, that the beautiful churches were built by the people who loved Christ so much and

or the tombs of the saints, giving the pilgrims an opportunity to reflect on the lives of these holy men and women in a tangible way.

"Being on this pilgrimage helped me to realize the humanity of the saints, and the way that God just led them through their life," Connor said.

Connor added the experience of going to these churches allowed him to connect with these "ordinary people who just followed the Lord and were willing to ask God where he was calling them." That experience, he said, "really allowed me to pray about my own vocation and meditate on how Christ is calling me to be a saint."

While each student encountered Christ in a unique way, walking the streets of Rome as a pilgrim left each student with a shared takeaway, the common call to be a saint in their daily lives.

"Throughout the week, we were praying before these relics and learning about these saints whose lives were testaments to our faith in love, but they were ordinary people ... who had this role to serve the church," Connor said. "This pilgrimage really made it clear that we are all called to be a saint. You don't need to be this perfect person. But you must really strive to find what God's calling you to do."



(Photo/Anabel Nosek)

#### Boylan National Honor Society Welcomes 42 New Juniors

ROCKFORD—Boylan Central Catholic High School inducted 42 juniors into the National Honor Society on March 27. Those selected are evaluated by the faculty on their scholarship, service, leadership, and character. The students, from left to right, starting in the top row, are Katherine Trenhaile, Natalie Tekampe, Gianna Marinaro, Will Georgis, Roman Gorsline, Jayden Bali, Colin Kossman, Maxwell Mroz, Hajime Bui, Bruno Hernandez, Erin Weightman, Stephanie Lewandowski, MaryTherese Harrison, (middle) Grace Petrak, Ava Kalt, Isabella Paris, Adelyn Hampl, Monika Toltzman, Ainsley Bridge, Juliana Gornicki, Mannon Stern, Sophia Koenig, Miguel Consuelos, Juliana Collins, Lily Shields, Madeline Nelson, Angie Perez, (bottom) Molly McCulloh, Ava Bingley, Madeline Lara, Monica Winkelmann, Grace Pingo, Sindy Salto, Kayley Guinto, Angelina Redisi, Gabriela Mace, Mary Clare Cyrs, Megan Larson, Saxon Casalena, Ilinca Vlase, Kaitlynn Sanchez and Jocelyn Ayala.

#### ACC Actors Fly High in Spring Musical



(Photo/Aurora Central Catholic High School, courtesy Al Benson)

AURORA—Actors in Aurora Central Catholic High School's March spring musical, Disney's "The Little Mermaid," added another level of spectacle: flight. Using aerial acting technology supplied by nearby Cortland-based Vertical Flying Effects and Theatrical Staging, Jillian Geronimo (pictured) and five other students soared over the stage.